



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Consumer
Service

Mountain
Plains
Region

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Reply to
Attn of:

SP 01-09

Subject:

Required Number of Free and Reduced Price School Meal
Applications to Verify under Focused Sampling

To:

ALL STATE AGENCY DIRECTORS - Colorado ED, Iowa, Kansas,
(Child Nutrition Programs) Missouri ED, Montana OPI,
Nebraska, North Dakota,
South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

To fulfill the verification of eligibility requirement of 7 CFR 245.6a, school food authorities (SFA/s) must verify either a random sample of their approved applications or a focused sample of their approved applications. The sampling method chosen by the SFA determines the number of applications that the SFA must verify.

This memorandum is to provide clarification of the required number of approved free and reduced price applications that must be verified when SFAs use focused sampling. We recognize that the wording of 7 CFR 245.6a(a) regarding the number of applications that must be verified under focused sampling may be confusing. The confusion stems from intertwining the "sample size" and "selection of income applications" without adequate punctuation of the sentence. We will clarify the wording in the regulation when we have an opportunity to do a technical amendment. Until the wording in the regulation is clarified, the *Eligibility Guidance for School Meals Manual*, which gives example of how to determine the number of free and reduced price applications that must be verified under focused sampling, and this memorandum will provide assistance.

What is the verification requirement under focused sampling?

Annually, by December 15, each SFA must select a sample of its approved free and reduced price meal applications and confirm those households' eligibility for the level of benefits for which the household has been approved. The minimum number of applications that must be verified is

based on the number of approved applications in the SFA on October 31. The minimum number of applications that must be verified may be projected, if the SFA chooses to begin the verification process prior to October 31 and, if necessary, the number is adjusted after October 31.

Under focused sampling the SFA must verify a percentage of applications that were approved based on income information, and a percentage of applications that were approved based on a current food stamp, TANF or FDPIR case number or other FDPIR identifier.

How many applications must be verified under focused sampling?

Under focused sampling, the SFA must verify:

1. 1 percent of **total** approved applications; if this percentage results in verifying more than 1,000 applications, the SFA may limit verification to 1,000 applications, **plus,**
2. the lesser of .5 percent (half of 1 percent) or 500 applications with a case number (food stamp, TANF or FDPIR case number or other FDPIR identifier).

At a minimum, at least one application must be selected and verified. When calculating sample sizes, all fractions or decimals must be rounded upward to the nearest whole number. A multi-child application counts as one application in calculating the sample size.

How is the 1 percent calculated?

1. Determine the **total** number of approved free and reduced price meal applications as of October 31 (applications with income information and applications with a case number).
2. Multiply the total number of approved applications by .01. The result is the number of applications with income information that the SFA must verify.

For example, a SFA has 4,500 total approved free and reduced price applications on October 31 (3,500 with income information and 1,000 with a case number). Multiply 4,500 X

.01 = 45 applications. The SFA must verify 45 applications that have income information. When the number exceeds 1,000, the SFA may limit their verification of income applications to 1,000 income applications.

How are the income applications selected?

1. Select the 1 percent or 1,000, whichever is less, from approved applications that listed household income within \$100 monthly, or \$1,200 annually, of the free and reduced price eligibility guidelines for that household size.
2. If there are more applications with monthly income within these limits than needed to meet the minimum sample size, select the sample using any method that is equitable and ensures that the same households are not selected each year.
3. If there are not enough applications with income within \$100 monthly or \$1,200 annually to meet the minimum required sample, select the remainder to be verified from applications with monthly (or annual) income closest to these thresholds.
4. If the total number of income applications is smaller than the required sample size, verify all income applications.

How is the .5 percent calculated?

1. From total approved applications, determine how many were approved because the household included a current food stamp, TANF or FDPIR case number or other FDPIR identifier.
2. Multiply the total number of applications with a case number by .005 (half of 1 percent). This is the number of applications with a case number that the SFA must verify. When the number exceeds 500, the SFA may limit their verification of applications with a case number to 500.

For example, a SFA has 4,500 total approved free and reduced price applications on October 31. One thousand of these applications have a case number. Multiply $1,000 \times .005 = 5$ applications. The SFA must verify 5 applications that have a case number.

How are applications with a case number selected?

Select .5 percent (half of 1 percent) or 500, whichever is less, of the applications with a food stamp, TANF or FDPIR case number or other FDPIR identifier. If there are more applications with a case number than needed to meet the minimum sample size, select the sample using any method that is equitable and ensures that the same households are not selected each year.

Summary of Example

In the example provided, the SFA with 4,500 applications (3,500 with income information and 1,000 with a case number) must verify 45 applications with income information and 5 applications with a case number for a total of 50 applications.

If you have any questions, please contact Joe Fisher at (303) 844-0355.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe Fisher for Darlene Sanchez".

DARLENE SANCHEZ
Acting Regional Director
Child Nutrition Programs